

TRANSIENT OCCUPANCY TAX

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3.16.010. Title.

This chapter shall be known as the "Uniform Transient Occupancy Tax Ordinance of the City of Sunnyvale." (Ord. 1250 § 1 (part), 1965: prior code § 8-8.01)

16.020. Adoption—Charter authority.

This chapter is adopted pursuant to the powers of the city of Sunnyvale as a charter city as provided in Article IV of the City Charter, and as authorized by Section 6 of Article XI of the Constitution of the state of California. (Ord. 1250 § 1 (part), 1965: prior code § 8-8.02)

3.16.030. Definitions.

Except where the context otherwise requires, the definitions given in this section govern the construction of this chapter:

(1) "Hotel" means any structure, or any portion of any structure, which is occupied or intended or designed for occupancy by transients for dwelling, lodging or sleeping purposes, and includes any hotel, inn, tourist home or house, motel, studio hotel, bachelor hotel, lodging house, rooming house, apartment house, dormitory, public or private club, mobile home or house trailer at a fixed location, or other similar structure or portion thereof.

(2) "Occupancy" means the use or possession, or the right to the use or possession of any room or rooms or

portion thereof, in any hotel for dwelling, lodging or sleeping purposes.

(3) "Operator" means the person who is proprietor of the hotel, whether in the capacity of owner, lessee, sublessee, mortgagee in possession, licensee, or any other capacity. Where the operator performs functions through a managing agent of any type or character other than an employee, the managing agent shall also be deemed an operator for the purposes of this chapter and shall have the same duties and liabilities as his principal. Compliance with the provisions of this chapter by either the principal or the managing agent shall, however, be considered to be compliance by both.

(4) "Person" means any individual, firm, partnership, joint venture, association, social club, fraternal organization, joint stock company, corporation, estate, trust, business trust, receiver, trustee, syndicate, or any other group or combination acting as a unit.

(5) "Rent" means the consideration charged, whether or not received, for the occupancy of space in a hotel valued in money, whether to be received in money, goods, labor or otherwise, including all receipts, cash, credits and property and services of any kind or nature, without any deduction therefrom whatsoever.

(6) "Tax administrator" means the director of finance.

(7) "Transient" means any individual who exercises occupancy or is entitled to occupancy by reason of concession, permit, right of access, license or other agreement for a period of thirty consecutive calendar days or less, counting portions of calendar days as full days, and including any individual who actually physically occupies the premises, by permission of any other person entitled to occupancy. (Ord. 2104-84 § 1; Ord. 1250 § 1 (part), 1965: prior code § 8-8.03)

3.16.040. Imposition—Rate—Payment.

For the privilege of occupancy in any hotel, each transient is subject to and shall pay a tax in the amount of eight percent of the rent charged by the operator through June 30, 1995, and eight and one-half percent of the rent charged by the operator on or after July 1, 1995. Said tax constitutes a debt owed by the transient to the city which is extinguished only by payment to the operator or to the city. The transient, or any person paying rent on the transient's behalf, shall pay the tax to the operator of the hotel at the time the rent is paid. If the rent is paid in installments, a proportionate share of the tax shall be paid with each installment. The unpaid tax shall be due upon the transient's ceasing to occupy space in the hotel. If for any reason the tax due is not paid to the operator of the hotel, the tax administrator may require that such tax shall be paid directly to the tax administrator. (Ord. 2485-94 § 1; Ord. 2298-89

§ 1: Ord. 2252-88 § 1: Ord. 2104-84 § 2: Ord. 1890-78
 § 1: Ord. 1403 § 2, 1967: Ord. 1250 § 1 (part), 1965:
 prior code § 8-8.04)

3.16.050. Exemptions.

No tax shall be imposed upon:

(a) Any person as to whom, or any occupancy as to which it is beyond the power of the city to impose the tax herein provided;

(b) Any federal or state of California officer or employee on business who shall pay rent by warrant or check drawn on the Treasury of the United States or the state of California or who provides written evidence of such official business on a form approved in advance by the tax administrator. Copies of the documentation for each exemption claimed must be submitted to the tax administrator with each return made pursuant to Section 3.16.080;

(c) Any officer or employee of a foreign government who is exempt by reason of express provisions of federal law or international treaty.

No exemption shall be granted except upon a claim therefor made at the time rent is collected and under penalty of perjury upon a form prescribed by the tax administrator. (Ord. 2485-94 § 2; Ord. 1764-75 § 1: Ord. 1250 § 1 (part), 1965: prior code § 8-8.05)

3.16.060. Operator's duties.

Each operator shall collect the tax imposed by this chapter to the same extent and at the same time as the rent is collected from every transient, or from any person paying rent on the transient's behalf. (Ord. 2104-84 § 3; Ord. 1250 § 1 (part), 1965: prior code § 8-8.06)

3.16.070. Operator—Registration.

Within thirty days after May 13, 1965, or within thirty days after commencing business, whichever is later, each operator of any hotel renting occupancy to transients shall register the hotel with the tax administrator and obtain from him a "transient occupancy registration certificate" to be at all times posted in a conspicuous place on the premises. The certificate shall, among other things, state the following:

- (a) The name of the operator;
- (b) The address of the hotel;
- (c) The date upon which the certificate was issued;
- (d) "This Transient Occupancy Registration Certificate signifies that the person named on the face hereof has fulfilled the requirements of the Uniform Transient Occupancy Tax Ordinance by registering with the Tax Administrator for the purpose of collecting from transients the Transient Occupancy Tax and remitting said tax to the Tax Administrator. This certificate does

not authorize any person to conduct any unlawful business or to conduct any lawful business in an unlawful manner, nor to operate a hotel without strictly complying with all local applicable laws, including but not limited to those requiring a permit from any board, commission, department or office of this city. This certificate does not constitute a permit." (Ord. 1250 § 1 (part), 1965: prior code § 8-8.07)

3.16.080. Operator—Reporting and remitting tax collected.

Each operator shall, on or before the last day of the month following the close of each calendar quarter, or at the close of any shorter reporting period which may be established by the tax administrator, make a return to the tax administrator, on forms provided by him, of the total rents charged and received and the amount of tax collected for transient occupancies. At the time the return is filed, the full amount of the tax collected shall be remitted to the tax administrator. The tax administrator may establish shorter reporting periods for any certificate holder if he deems it necessary in order to insure collection of the tax and he may require further information in the return. Returns and payments are due immediately upon cessation of business for any reason. All taxes collected by operators pursuant to this chapter shall be held in trust for the account of the city until payment thereof is made to the tax administrator. (Ord. 1250 § 1 (part), 1965: prior code § 8-8.08)

3.16.090. Delinquency—Penalties and interest.

(a) Original Delinquency. Any operator who fails to remit any tax imposed by this chapter within the time required shall pay a penalty of ten percent of the amount of the tax in addition to the amount of the tax.

(b) Continued Delinquency. Any operator who fails to remit any delinquent remittance on or before a period of thirty days following the date on which the remittance first became delinquent shall pay a second delinquency penalty of ten percent of the amount of the tax in addition to the amount of the tax and the ten percent penalty first imposed.

(c) Fraud. If the tax administrator determines that the nonpayment of any remittance due under this chapter is due to fraud, a penalty of twenty-five percent of the amount of the tax shall be added thereto in addition to the penalties stated in subsections (a) and (b) of this section.

(d) Interest. In addition to the penalties imposed, any operator who fails to remit any tax imposed by this chapter shall pay interest at the rate of one-half of one percent per month or fraction thereof on the amount of the tax, exclusive of penalties, from the date on which the remittance first became delinquent until paid.

(e) Penalties Merged with Tax. Every penalty imposed and such interest as accrues under the provisions of this section shall become a part of the tax herein required to be paid. (Ord. 1250 § 1 (part), 1965; prior code § 8-8.09)

**3.16.100. Failure to collect and report tax—
Determination of tax by tax
administrator.**

If any operator fails or refuses to collect said tax and to make, within the time provided in this chapter, any report and remittance of said tax or any portion thereof required by this chapter, the tax administrator shall proceed in such manner as he may deem best to obtain facts and information on which to base his estimate of the tax due. As soon as the tax administrator shall procure such facts and information as he is able to obtain upon which to base the assessment of any tax imposed by this chapter and payable by any operator who has failed or refused to collect the same and to make such report and remittance, he shall proceed to determine and assess against such operator the tax, interest and penalties provided for by this chapter. In case such determination is made, the tax administrator shall give a notice of the amount so assessed by serving it personally or by depositing it in the United States mail, postage prepaid, addressed to the operator so assessed at his last known place of address. Such operator may within ten days after the serving or mailing of such notice make application in writing to the tax administrator for a hearing on the amount assessed. If application by the operator for a hearing is not made within the time prescribed, the tax, interest and penalties, if any, determined by the tax administrator shall become final and conclusive and immediately due and payable. If such application is made, the tax administrator shall give not less than five days written notice in the manner prescribed herein to the operator to show cause at a time and place fixed in the notice why the amount specified therein should not be fixed for such tax, interest and penalties. At such hearing, the operator may appear and offer evidence why such specified tax, interest and penalties should not be so fixed. After such hearing the tax administrator shall determine the proper tax to be remitted and shall thereafter give written notice to the person in the manner prescribed herein of such determination and the amount of such tax, interest and penalties. The amount determined to be due shall be payable after fifteen days unless an appeal is taken as provided in Section 3.16.110. (Ord. 1250 § 1 (part), 1965; prior code § 8-8.10)

3.16.110. Appeal.

Any operator aggrieved by any decision of the tax administrator with respect to the amount of such tax, interest and penalties, if any, may appeal to the city council by filing a notice of appeal with the city clerk within fifteen days of the serving or mailing of the determination of tax due. The city council shall fix a time and place for hearing such appeal, and the city clerk shall give notice in writing to such operator at his last known place of address. The findings of the city council shall be final and conclusive and shall be served upon the appellant in the manner prescribed above for service of notice of hearing. Any amount found to be due shall be immediately due and payable upon the service of notice. (Ord. 1250 § 1 (part), 1965; prior code § 8-8.11)

3.16.120. Operator—Records required.

It shall be the duty of every operator liable for the collection and payment to the city of any tax imposed by this chapter to keep and preserve, for a period of three years, all records as may be necessary to determine the amount of such tax as he may have been liable for the collection of and payment to the city, which records the tax administrator shall have the right to inspect at all reasonable times. Such records shall be maintained at the operator's premises or shall be available for delivery to the tax administrator within one week after request. The records shall include at least the following:

- (a) Daily summaries of room occupancies;
- (b) A record of each occupancy charge for which an exemption is claimed, including the name of the individual occupying the room, dates of occupancy, and reasons for exemption;
- (c) Lists of bad debts claimed for exemption, including names and addresses of debtor and amount of room rent unpaid. (Ord. 2104-84 § 4; Ord. 1250 § 1 (part), 1965; prior code § 8-8.12)

3.16.130. Refunds.

(a) Whenever the amount of any tax, interest or penalty has been overpaid or paid more than once or has been erroneously or illegally collected or received by the city under this chapter, it may be refunded as provided in subparagraphs (b) and (c) of this section provided a claim in writing therefor, stating under penalty of perjury the specific grounds upon which the claim is founded, is filed with the tax administrator within three years of the date of payment. The claim shall be on forms furnished by the tax administrator.

(b) An operator may claim a refund or take as credit against taxes collected and remitted the amount overpaid, paid more than once or erroneously or illegally

collected or received when it is established in a manner prescribed by the tax administrator that the person from whom the tax has been collected was not a transient; provided, however, that neither a refund nor a credit shall be allowed unless the amount of the tax so collected has either been refunded to the transient or credited to rent subsequently payable by the transient to

the operator.

(c) A transient may obtain a refund of taxes overpaid or paid more than once or erroneously or illegally collected or received by the city by filing a claim in the manner provided in subparagraph (a) of this section, but only when the tax was paid by the transient directly to the tax administrator, or when the transient having paid the tax to the operator, establishes to the satisfaction of the tax administrator that the transient has been unable to obtain a refund from the operator who collected the tax.

(d) No refund shall be paid under the provisions of this section unless the claimant establishes his right thereto by written records showing entitlement thereto. (Ord. 1250 § 1 (part), 1965; prior code § 8-8.13).

3.16.140. Actions to collect.

Any tax required to be paid by any transient under the provisions of this chapter shall be deemed a debt owed by the transient to the city. Any such tax collected by an operator which has not been paid to the city shall be deemed a debt owed by the operator to the city. Any person owing money to the city under the provisions of this chapter shall be liable to an action brought in the name of the city of Sunnyvale for the recovery of such amount. (Ord. 1250 § 1 (part), 1965; prior code § 8-8.14).

3.16.150. Penalty for violations.

(a) Any person, firm or corporation, whether as principal, agent, employee or otherwise, violating any of the provisions of this chapter is guilty of a misdemeanor, and, upon conviction thereof, shall be punishable as set forth in Chapter 1.04 of this code.

(b) Any operator or other person who fails or refuses to register as required herein, or to furnish any return required to be made, or who fails or refuses to furnish a supplemental return or other data required by the tax administrator, or who renders a false or fraudulent return or claim, is guilty of a misdemeanor, and is punishable as aforesaid. Any person required to make, render, sign or verify any report or claim who makes any false or fraudulent report or claim with intent to defeat or evade the determination of any amount due required by this chapter to be made, is guilty of a misdemeanor and is punishable as aforesaid. The remedies provided for in this chapter shall be cumulative and exclusive. (Ord. 2422-92 § 3; Ord. 1250 § 2, 1965).

3.16.160. Effective date.

The tax hereby imposed became operative and was imposed on January 1, 1968. (Ord. 1403 § 1, 1967; Ord. 1250 § 3, 1965).